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The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) deeply mourns the loss of Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), a longtime advocate of human rights, including the right to freedom of religion, who passed away this morning from viral pneumonia. He was 89 years old.

“Throughout his public career, Senator Lautenberg fought for oppressed people whose fundamental rights, including religious freedom, were being denied,” said USCIRF Chair Katrina Lantos Swett. “For more than two decades he has championed a measure, appropriately called the Lautenberg Amendment, which provides a vital lifeline to freedom for persecuted religious minorities. Congress now has the opportunity to make this measure permanent, and we urge Members of Congress to do so.”

Senator Lautenberg was born the son of immigrants in Paterson, New Jersey. He served in Congress from 1982 to 2001, and then again from 2003 to the time of his death. Senator Lautenberg was the last World War II veteran serving in the Senate.

To interview a USCIRF Commissioner please contact USCIRF at (202) 523-3258 or media@uscirf.gov